ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
OCT 31 1940
MR. BERLE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

October 30, 1940.

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A-B - Mr. Berle:

U - Mr. Welles:

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
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MR. WELLES

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THE SAADABAD GROUP IN THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Tehran's despatch of August 2, in reporting the opening of an Iraqi Legation in Afghanistan, states that "it would be rash to assume that the establishment of an Iraqi diplomatic mission indicates a strengthening of the Saadabad group." The Legation goes on to say, however, that events in Europe had caused the four nations concerned to make a more serious attempt to draw closer in order to be in a better position to withstand intimidation or even to face a threat of aggression. Turkey and Iraq, it appears, intimated to Afghanistan and Iran that the Soviets must not be given an opportunity to play one against another.

The Saadabad Pact, signed on July 8, 1937, by Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Turkey, provides that each party shall refrain from interference in the internal affairs of the others, shall respect the common frontiers and shall consult in all conflicts of an international character which affect the common interests. It is thus a consultative pact lacking teeth.

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On the day of signature, the Foreign Ministers of the four countries announced their decision to form a Council composed of themselves, to meet once a year. A permanent secretariat was to be formed. The Council was "to deliberate on questions affecting the common interests of the countries signatory to the Pact and to coordinate their attitude."

The fact that two of the countries concerned have only now entered into direct diplomatic relations and the fact that their recent consultation on a matter of common concern is cause for special comment are indications that the Pact has not been a factor of much importance since its entry into force.

The Council has not, apparently, met since 1937 when the Pact was signed, and in the present international situation it is obvious that such a meeting would be an act of courage. A word from Russia or from Germany would doubtless be sufficient to nip it in the bud.

The time for open consultation under the Saadabad Pact having passed, thought in Tehran has apparently evolved along the lines indicated in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the Legation's telegram of October 20, which is attached. These paragraphs may be interpreted as follows:

1. The general identity of the interests of the Saadabad countries in the face of international developments is realized at Tehran more strongly in October than it was in August.

2. This realization has not been translated into action, despite vague talk of strengthening the Pact, probably because the four countries dare not risk drawing the lightning as a group which singly some of them have a chance to escape.

3. Such being the case, Iran, by suggestions thrown out informally to our Chargé at Tehran, is encouraging the United States Government to form a defensive association of independence-loving powers in which the United States and Great Britain would be the leading members.

4. The Iranians apparently contemplate a commitment on our part which would include the Saadabad countries but would permit them to associate themselves with it or not, as might suit their interests.

Iran, naturally, desires to encourage a development by which she would have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

It is apparent from what has been said earlier that the possibilities of the Saadabad Pact, itself a weak instrument, have not been fully utilized. The

Saadabad

Saadabad countries do not form a well-knit group which can be dealt with effectively as such. A relatively ineffective group in peace, they would be even less effective in war. Of the four countries, only Turkey has an army seriously to be reckoned with by a major Power. Should the Soviets leave Turkey in peace and invade Iran, it is most improbable that the Turks, beset by the spectres of Germany and Italy, could go to the aid of the Iranians. There is even less likelihood that Afghanistan would or could help Iran, and so on.

Since the Saadabad group is not a "going concern," we are practically obliged to consider the needs and desires of the countries which compose it on an individual basis as the practice has been.

The Iranian approach, if it is an approach, is studiedly casual and vague. We are really not called upon to reply to it or to comment on it officially one way or another, and NE believes that it would be preferable to abstain.

Wallace Murray

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TELEGRAM RECEIVED

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JAN 8 - 1943
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

LSH
This telegram must be paraphrased before being communicated to anyone other than a Governmental agency. (BR)

FROM Ankara

Dated January 7, 1943

Rec'd 7:28 a.m. 8th

Secretary of State,

Washington,

767.90g12 non-aggression/145

39, January 7, 1 p.m.

767.90g12 Non-aggression

In conversation yesterday with the Minister for Foreign Affairs I inquired of him as to whether any particular significance should be attached to the recent announcement by the Turkish Government of the renewal of the Saadabad Pact. Numan replied that as the treaty provided by its terms for its automatic renewal unless denounced the announcement had not special significance. I then inquired as to whether there was any truth to a rumor that the German Government had objected to the renewal of this treaty. Numan said the rumor was entirely devoid of foundation.

STEINHARDT

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ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

AMERICAN EMBASSY

AIR MAIL

No. 223

Ankara, Turkey, January 6, 1943.

Subject: Renewal of the Saadabad Pact.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that notice was taken in Turkey of the automatic renewal of the Saadabad Pact for a further period of five years on December 26th last by an editorial on that subject in the semi-official ULUS of Ankara of that date signed by its chief editor, Deputy Falih Rifki Atay, and by an announcement concerning the renewal broadcast that evening in the Radio Ankara Journal, the text of which was copied in a number of the Istanbul newspapers of the following day. This announcement as reported in the press was limited to an explanation of the automatic renewal through the fact that none of the signatory states had announced their intention during the previous six months of denouncing the Pact, followed by this statement: "Turkey signed the Saadabad Pact having for its purpose the continuation of good relations with its neighbors and the maintenance of peace. There is no doubt that Turkey is equally animated with these same sentiments today."

Falih Rifki Atay in his editorial in the ULUS states that the sanguinary drama which is a matter of life and death to several nations is spreading with all its fury to the very gates of the powers signatory of the Saadabad Pact. In spite of this, he continues, these powers, just as in 1937, are faithful to their cause, the aim of which is to serve the general peace and to preserve their liberty and their country. Let us hope, therefore, the editorial concludes, that the second world war which, we should like to be certain, will come to an end during the course of the next five years of the Saadabad Pact, will not constitute for the participating nations a new source of danger, and that the friendship existing among these four nations may be a factor aiding the organization of the future peace.

The renewal of the Saadabad Pact was again mentioned in an editorial entitled "The Saadabad Pact and Tomorrow's Peace and Security Policy", by Deputy Necmeddin Sadak, who generally reflects the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the AKŞAM of Istanbul of December 29, 1942. Deputy Sadak points out in this editorial, a translation of which is enclosed, that the Saadabad Pact has been no more successful than the Balkan Pact in preventing the war from spreading to the area of the signatory powers but,

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he maintains, Turkey's policy of armed neutrality nevertheless has prevented the conflict from spreading to this area in a greater degree. He adds that Turkey cannot be blamed for "the basic errors which these pacts presented, errors which have since been discovered" and which he attributes to the "Parsimonious hands which left the edifice incomplete." Deputy Sadak then gives it as his opinion that the importance of treaties of this kind which Turkey has endeavored to conclude with her neighbors resides not only in the fact that she wishes to create around her an atmosphere of peace but also that these agreements can be of great future usefulness. He concludes his article by expressing his views on the nature of the new order which should prevail at the termination of the present war which, he feels, should not be based on the domination of the great powers but rather on regional agreements. It is only in this way he declares that a country will be able to live peacefully within a force greater than its own and still be guaranteed through mutual sacrifices.

Respectfully yours,

Laurence A. Steinhardt.

Enclosure :
1. Translation of editorial.

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To Department in original and hectograph. ✓ to DCA

COPIES TO: Legation, Baghdad.
" Tehran
" Kabul.

Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 223, dated January 6, 1943, from the American Embassy at Ankara, Turkey.

SOURCE: AKŞAM, Istanbul, December 29, 1942.

TRANSLATION

THE SAADABAD PACT AND TOMORROW'S PEACE AND SECURITY POLICY.

By: Necmeddin Sadak.

Just as medicines cause a sick person who is attacked by an incurable disease to smile, the automatic renewal of the Saadabad Treaty which has just taken place during this fourth and terrible year of war might present to the mind the aspect of a political spirit which no longer exists.

But the aspect is quite different. Even in the midst of this war which has created a new morale which desires that the friend become an enemy, that the enemy become a friend and which causes the pledged word and signature to be forgotten, the renewal of the Saadabad Pact presents, we believe, an advantage in this sense that it remains a document, of which very few exist, of peace and friendship.

At a time when much too much importance was being accorded to pacts and signatures among nations, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan signed the Saadabad Pact which, in the midst of this unparalleled war, has remained without application, like many other treaties of this kind. No one can pretend that the Middle and Near East have not been hit by the war thanks to the Saadabad Pact. Just as the Balkan Pact which was otherwise important, did not prevent the war from spreading to the Balkans, neither could the Saadabad Pact have prevented one or the other of the parties from bringing the war into the East. The only fact which has prevented the war from spreading to the East (to a greater degree) is that as a result of the armed neutrality policy of Turkey the conflagration of war has been obliged to change its path. Just as with the Balkan Pact, neither was the Saadabad Pact of such a nature as to be able to resist the concussions and shocks. And one cannot blame Turkey for the basic errors which these pacts presented, errors which have since been discovered. Parsimonious hands have left the edifice incomplete.

The regrettable end of such treaties being evident, what could one hope for from the Saadabad Pact?

Undoubtedly the Saadabad Pact which has just been renewed at the end of its fifth year, could not preserve either Iraq or Iran from a danger which could come from the north or from the south and could not assure aid to Turkey in case the latter should have entered the war.

In our opinion, the importance of the treaties of this kind which Turkey has endeavored to conclude with its neighbors resides not only in the fact that she wished to create around her an atmosphere of peace, but also in that such agreements can be of great usefulness in the future.

The peace of tomorrow will be a period of difficult trials for states and governments as is the case at present when we are in the midst of war. Those who, yesterday, were the first victims of aggression,

tomorrow

tomorrow will prefer not to be made the instruments of the veiled designs of the large states who will prepare the peace. These victims have learned and will learn again still better tomorrow that the only means for living in peace, tranquillity and independence is to be strong enough to ward off from themselves all foreign designs. As remaining alone is not sufficient to hold one's own against everyone, the way to become strong is to unite.

With respect to the peace of tomorrow, they are already talking of "large" and of "small" states; they say that the large states will establish the rights of the small countries.

In our opinion, tomorrow's order should not be based on the domination of such or such other group of great powers, but certainly on the regional agreements and mutual groups which would be constituted by virtue of this fact. It is only on these terms that a country could live peacefully within a force greater than its own and which would be guaranteed, thanks to mutual sacrifices. It is only in this manner that one may succeed in not having small or large, strong or weak, states. And it is only in this way that aggression could be eliminated.

Tr: rs

LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Confidential. Kabul, January 19, 1943.

No. 95.

Subject: Renewal of the Saadabad Pact. Historical Résumé.

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DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to report that the Afghan Foreign Minister recently informed me that his Government considered the Saadabad Pact as automatically renewed until 1947. As the Department will recall, the Saadabad Pact was signed in Tehran on July 8, 1937, between Afghanistan, Persia, Iraq, and Turkey, and one of its clauses provided that it was to remain in force for five years. If none of the contracting parties gave six months' notice of withdrawal it would continue in force for a further period of five years, and so on. No notice of withdrawal appears to have been given by any of the signatories.

The Afghan participation in this quadrilateral pact was described in my despatch from Tehran No. 1099 of July 18, 1937. Further references to the treaty will also be found in my Tehran despatches No. 1095 of July 10, 1937, and No. 1097 of July 14, 1937.

Since then I have been collecting additional bits of information on the subject, both in Tehran and in Beirut, as well as in Kabul since my arrival at this post. The following observations are therefore intended to supplement the contents of the above-mentioned despatches.

It seems now reasonably certain that the idea of a Middle Eastern Bloc originated with Rustu Aras, the active Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, and took shape after a conversation he had in October 1932 with Furrughi, the then Foreign Minister of Persia. The underlying thought on the part of Rustu Aras seems to have been to reinforce with a regional non-aggression treaty the pledges already given by Turkey, Persia, and Iraq under the Covenant of the League and the Kellogg Pact. The intention was to include also Great Britain because of her maritime frontiers with the other three, and to let Persia round out the agreement by similar treaties between herself, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan. He believed that Turkey would thus in an emergency be assured of the neutrality she needed for her economic development, and that at the same time the application of the League Covenant would be "regionalized" and

thus

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thus perhaps ensure that - in the event of a war between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. - the Middle East would not necessarily be forced to side with one or the other of the belligerents, nor become a battleground for them.

In November, 1932, these suggestions were informally put before the British Ambassador in Ankara, but the latter does not seem to have encouraged them. At any rate, nothing further was heard of them until December, 1933, when the Turkish Ambassador in London again reverted to the proposal in an interview with Sir Robert Vansittart, who was then Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Turkish Ambassador said he felt it might have a steadying influence over a wide area and make for peace. The Turkish Government was interested, but wished to know the attitude of the British Government before committing itself further. Sir Robert is said to have expressed the view that such a regional entente was perhaps superfluous, considering that many similar agreements were already in existence and that the provisions of the League and of the Kellogg Pact were already binding upon the countries concerned.

Receiving little encouragement in London the Turkish Government again turned to Persia, where the Foreign Minister, Mr. Kazemi, now took the initiative in negotiating a non-aggression treaty which was to be limited to Persia, Turkey, and Iraq. But nearly two years passed, and it was only on October 2, 1935, that a draft was initialed by the three countries at Geneva. At that time the Iraqi Government took special care to make sure that nothing in the proposed pact conflicted with the provisions of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of Alliance. A Treaty of Friendship between Iraq and Persia, which was to have been signed at this time, was indefinitely postponed because Mr. Kazemi declined to accept a revision of the disputed Shatt-el-Arab frontier and to settle the anchorage question at Abadan.

In November, 1935, i.e. about a month after the new pact was initialed, Kazemi visited Kabul for ten days. He explained the draft to the Afghan Prime Minister, Mohamed Hashim Khan, as an honest effort to draw the Middle Eastern States more closely together, and he invited the Afghan Government to sign it too. The Prime Minister is reported to have replied that he considered the Covenant of the League of Nations as affording sufficient guarantees to his country, without seeking any "regional collective security" apart from the League. He also intimated dissatisfaction with the award made by Turkey in May, 1935, in a boundary dispute which had favored Persia at the expense of Afghanistan. (I am told no official protest was made merely because the area involved was largely desert and uninhabited). The Afghan Government is traditionally distrustful of Persian motives, and Kazemi found it difficult to overcome the deep-seated antipathy which exists between Afghans and Persians because of their religious differences. However, Mohamed Hashim Khan was not unaware of three important factors which might make it advisable to join a Western Asiatic group - quite apart from the advantage of putting the relations with Persia on a more cordial footing:

(a) Italy had just attacked Abyssinia, and the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact had proved powerless to prevent it;

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(b) German influence was beginning to make itself increasingly felt in Afghanistan - see my telegram No. 129, November 28, 11 p.m. (1942) - and fear of Russia was always uppermost in the minds of the Afghans;

(c) Persian irredentism in Western Afghanistan might

might be more easily held in check if the Afghan Government had closer ties with Turkey and Iraq.

Mohamed Hashim Khan therefore decided that it could certainly do no harm if Afghanistan adhered to an Eastern Four-Power Pact, especially as refusal to adhere might well be misunderstood and arouse suspicion, particularly on the part of Persia. He accordingly wrote a letter to Kazemi in which he informed him that Afghanistan was prepared to join, and that the Ambassador in Tehran would be instructed to sign whenever the treaty was ready.

The British Government was still of the opinion that the pact was superfluous, but it looked upon the proposed adherence of Afghanistan with indifference. The Soviet Government, while voicing misgivings as to the real aims of this proposed new Eastern pact, raised no formal objections to the adherence of the Afghan Government.

However, a year and a half more was to elapse before the pact was actually signed. Turkey and Afghanistan were ready, but numerous frontier and other disputes between Persia and Iraq formed considerable obstacles to an agreement between the latter two countries. At first the Iraqi Government was inclined to secure the good will of Turkey by signing even before the settlement of its differences with Tehran, but a violation of the Iraq frontier by Persian troops in July, 1936, caused it to change its mind. Rustu Aras finally, in September, 1936, informed the Iraqi Prime Minister that if the outstanding disputes with Persia were not settled by March, 1937, Ankara would bring pressure to bear on Tehran to accept the existing boundary for the time being and to discuss navigation rights on the Shatt-el-Arab after signature of the treaty. However, this proved unnecessary, for when the Turkish Foreign Minister arrived in Tehran in June, 1937, Iraq and Persia were ready to sign a treaty which removed the boundary and navigation difficulties, and the four countries were finally able to sign the Saadabad Pact on July 8, 1937.

Although it has now been in effect for five and a half years, it cannot be said to have had a fair trial because of the outbreak of the Second World War. For although the pact rested on a certain general foundation of mutual interests, it was in reality nothing but a loose combination of countries whose individual policies remained practically independent of the other signatories. It was neither a military alliance nor even a solid bloc of neutrals.

Turkey's moves in particular were followed with intense and anxious interest by the other three. They were much impressed when, in October, 1939, Turkey signed mutual assistance agreements with Great Britain and France, and tightened her ties of friendship with Russia as a result of Axis aggression. Afghanistan in particular tried to appraise the significance to her of it all, but on the whole decided to wait and see who would ultimately have the upper hand at Ankara - the Democracies, the Soviets, or the Axis.

Turkey had always claimed that her treaty engagements with the Democracies did not affect or conflict with the Saadabad Pact, but Afghanistan never quite accepted that theory. Nor was she prepared to cooperate when there was some talk of extending the scope of the Saadabad Pact by a treaty of alliance between Turkey, Egypt and Iraq, and the suggestion was also coldly received in Tehran. At that time (i.e. 1939-40) both Persia and Afghanistan were still too strictly neutral to risk arousing either Axis or Soviet

resentment

resentment by allowing the Saadabad Pact to assume the form of a semi-military alliance.

Today the whole picture has, of course, changed. The unity between the original signatories has already been destroyed by the events in Iraq and Persia, and the old Saadabad Pact may therefore be considered as dead. But it is a tempting thought whether the time is not perhaps ripe to revive it, under the aegis of the United Nations and with the inclusion of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as a manifestation of the solidarity of the nations of the Middle East against the aggressive designs of the Axis.

Respectfully yours,

C. Van H. Engert

In quadruplicate.
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